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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
23 July 1965

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HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
No significant military developments have been reported in South Vietnam during the past 24 hours; however, several minor incidents occurred late yesterday, including the wounding of six US helicopter crewmen by Viet Cong ground fire near Bien Hoa Air Base and the terrorist bombing of the United States AID Mission Provincial Headquarters in Lam Dong Province (Paras. 1-2).

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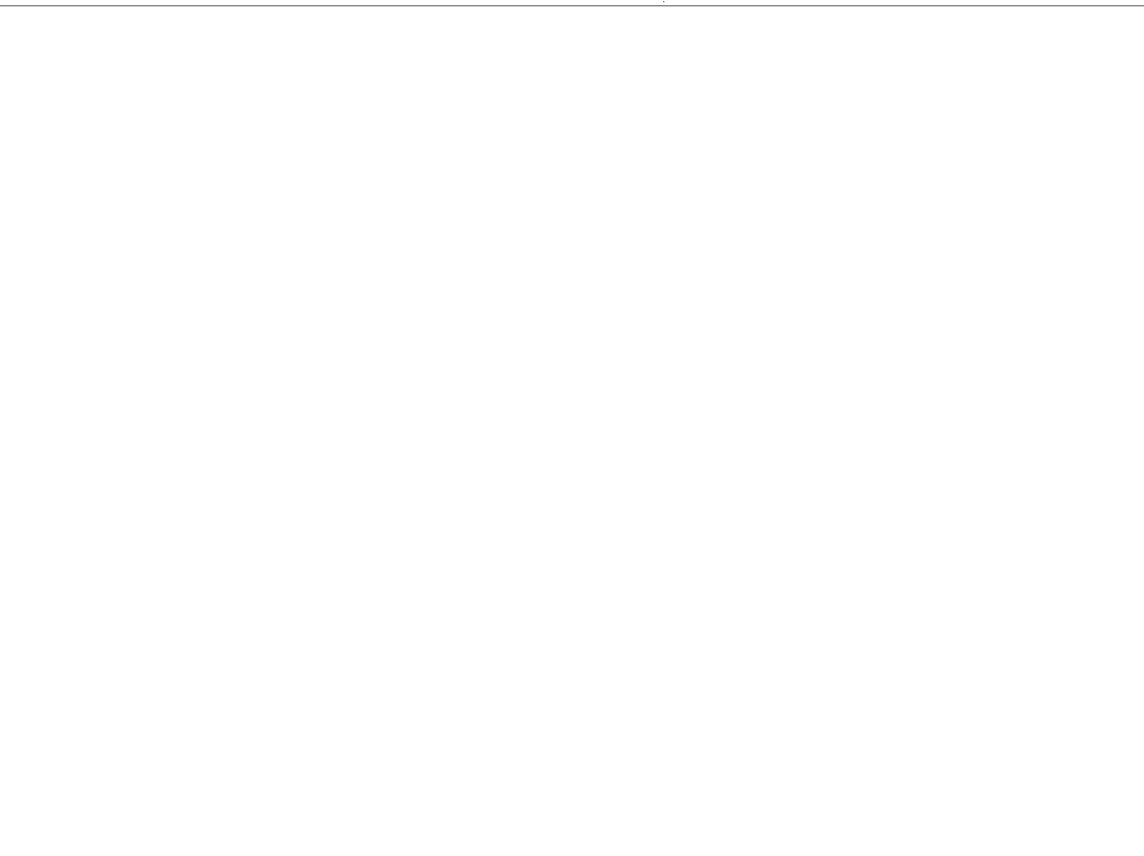
Officially confirmed Communist military activity for 21 July includes a Viet Cong ambush in Darlac Province, which may have wiped out more than a company of government troops (Para. 4). US battle casualties sustained during the week 10-17 July have been received from MACV (Para. 8). The results of Vietnamese-US coastal surveillance efforts during 13-20 July have been reported (Para. 9). Recent reporting from Saigon points up an increase of 141,448 in the armed forces of South Vietnam during the period of 1 July 1964 to 1 July 1965 (Para. 10).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
According to South Vietnam's official press, the government has signed a decree providing stiff penalties for graft, economic exploitation, and sympathy for Communism or neutralism (Para. 1). South Vietnamese Air Force officers have taken over the management of the country's civil airline (Para. 2). The minister of war is making counterproposals to Premier Ky's plan for mobilizing youth (Para. 3). The Apostolic delegate has intervened to ease Vietnamese Catholic concern over the implications of Lodge as ambassador to South Vietnam (Para. 5). FULRO, an autonomy movement among ethnic tribes in the highlands, has approached South Vietnamese Government representatives with a proposal for cooperation against the Viet Cong (Para. 6).



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V. Communist Political Developments: Liberation Front propaganda stresses the difficulties and hardships which lie ahead for the Viet Cong but expresses belief in eventual victory in stronger terms than at any time in the recent past (Para. 1).

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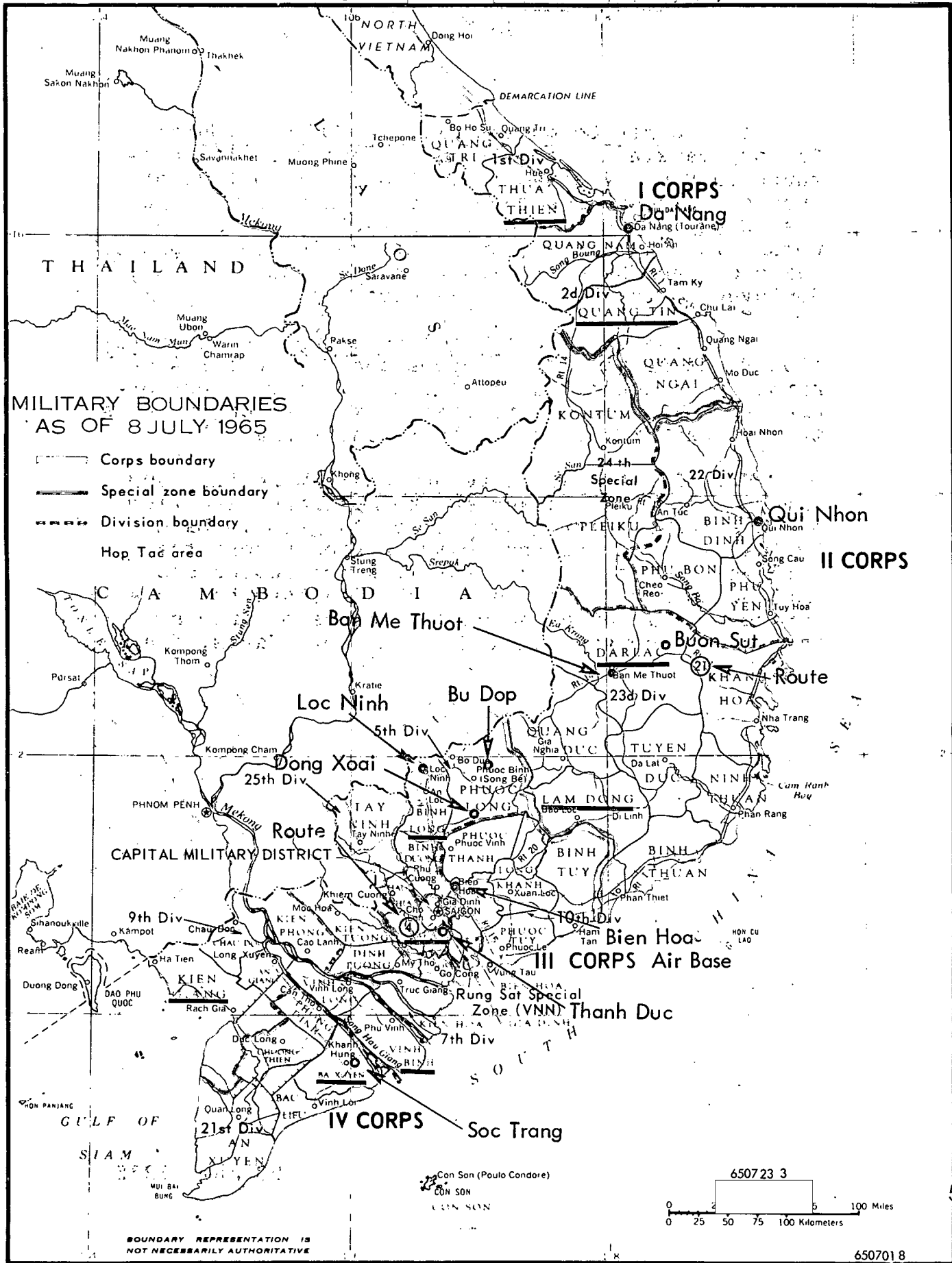
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SOUTH VIETNAM

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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No significant military developments have been reported in South Vietnam during the past 24 hours.

2. However, several minor actions were reported late yesterday. Six US helicopter crewmen were wounded by Viet Cong ground fire while providing close air support for a sweep operation near Bien Hoa Air Base, 15 miles northeast of Saigon. Viet Cong terrorists detonated a mine at the United States AID Mission Provincial Headquarters in Lam Dong Province, 80 miles northeast of Saigon, slightly injuring one American and causing minor physical damage. It was also reported today that, on 21 July, Vietnamese security officials apprehended a laundress attempting to smuggle plastic explosives into the US helicopter base at Soc Trang in Ba Xuyen Province. The woman had apparently worked at the base for several months, washing the clothing of US military personnel, and sometimes tidying up their barracks. Following interrogation, she was summarily executed by Vietnamese troops.

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4. MACV's military report for 21 July shows 104 Viet Cong - initiated incidents, 11 of which occurred during the 24-hour reporting period. In Darlac Province, Regional and Popular Forces soldiers conducting a security mission along Route 21 from Buon Sut to the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot were ambushed for the second consecutive day by a Communist force of undetermined strength. Friendly losses were reported as 136 men missing with their weapons. Guerrilla casualties were five killed. Only

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14 government soldiers managed to escape the enemy encirclement and make their way back to Buon Sut. In Vinh Binh Province, Communist guerrillas attacked a Popular Forces outpost, killing two defenders and capturing four. The district town of Thanh Duc in Long An Province was shelled by 60-mm. mortar fire. Viet Cong saboteurs detonated six mines on Highway 4 in Long An Province, interrupting traffic for eight hours, and blew up a military vehicle in Thua Thien Province, wounding eight persons. Meanwhile, small-scale terrorism, hamlet entry and harassment, and small-arms harassing fire actions continued throughout the four corps tactical zones of South Vietnam.

5. American and Vietnamese aircraft flew combat air operations against Viet Cong troop concentrations and suspected base camps, supply points, and staging areas throughout South Vietnam on 21 July. Pilots reported an estimated total of 37 guerrillas killed, 168 structures destroyed, 125 structures damaged, and six sampans destroyed.

6. Two Vietnamese civilians were killed and 15 wounded yesterday when ordnance from USAF aircraft fell on a hamlet in Kien Giang Province. The aircraft were on a strike mission against a nearby target when the incident occurred.

7. In other air developments yesterday, a USAF A-1E Skyraider on a strike mission against an enemy target west of Qui Nhon crashed after being hit by ground fire, killing the pilot. An O-1F observation aircraft on a forward air control mission crashed and burned in Quang Tin Province south of Da Nang, killing its two-man crew (one US, one ARVN). The cause of the crash has not been determined.

8. According to MACV, US battle casualties during the period 10-17 July totaled 99 (16 KIA and 83 WIA). In addition, there were six nonbattle casualties (one death and five injuries). There were no US civilian casualties.

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9. During the period 13-20 July, the sea and coastal forces of the Vietnamese Navy inspected 3,086 junks and 11,610 persons, while the USN inspected 149 wooden and 110 steel-hulled ships. No confirmed Viet Cong were detained. Naval gun fire support missions were conducted by five USN ships along the coastal regions of South Vietnam during the week. A total of 729 rounds of ammunition was expended against 23 Viet Cong targets.

10. During the period 1 July 1964 to 1 July 1965, the total strength of South Vietnam's military and paramilitary forces increased by 141,448 (from 445,351 to 586,799). All components, with the exception of the Popular Force, are reported by the Saigon Embassy to be increasing at the planned rates toward the established goals for 1965. However, there is slippage in the creation of new units for the regular forces because of the necessity to divert trained manpower that had been destined for 11 of the total of 31 programmed infantry battalions into existing battalions whose strengths were considered unacceptably low. Only four new infantry battalions will be added to the existing regular structure in 1965. The following table reflects the growth of force strengths during the past year:

<u>Force Component</u>	<u>Strength 1 July 1964</u>	<u>Strength 1 July 1965</u>	<u>Dif- ference</u>
Regular	215,235	262,096	+ 46,861
Regional	87,317	107,652	+ 20,335
Popular	99,611	149,029	+ 49,418
Coastal Defense	3,311	3,609	+ 298
CIDG	18,000	21,721	+ 3,721
National Police	21,877	42,692	+ 20,815
TOTAL	445,351	586,799	+141,448

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Directory chairman General Nguyen Van Thieu has signed a decree providing stiff penalties, including death, for various crimes including graft, economic profiteering, and sympathy for Communism or neutralism. Although the text of the decree is not yet available, such penalties had been foreshadowed in initial policy statements by Thieu and Premier Ky.

2. The South Vietnamese Air Force has apparently taken over control of Air Vietnam, the country's civil airline, as well as control of traffic at Da Nang and Nha Trang airports. The civilian president of Air Vietnam and two other directors have been replaced by three air force colonels; the new president, Colonel Pham Long Suu, has no business experience. Premier Ky has reportedly also named Colonel Tran Van Minh, a former tactical wing commander, as chief of staff and deputy commander of the air force, with Ky retaining the air force command title. Minh is considered honest but not exceptionally [redacted] close to Ky. The more logical choice to run the air force, Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Loan who was formerly Ky's deputy, is being retained as chief of the Military Security Service presumably because Ky desires a trusted man in this post.

3. The defense minister and chief of the Joint General Staff, General Co, has reportedly declared that Premier Ky's plans for setting up a youth program--under which selected youth would be used in government economic programs and exempted from the draft--are unacceptable. Co's plan is to conscript males from 18 to 45 and females from 18 to 30 in a "home guard" where they would be given both political and military training, and would assist in guarding installations,

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[redacted]

providing intelligence, and explaining government policy. The men would be subject to the draft. This "home guard" would be subordinate to the Defense Ministry and under military command; the Ministry of Youth, which would assist in administration, has proposed that existing youth organizations be incorporated under the program.

4. I Corps Commander General Thi is reported to have asked a professor at Hué University to assist in identifying technicians qualified to run a government. The professor regards Thi's request as indirect criticism of the present government. There have been indications that Thi harbors political ambitions of his own.

5. The Apostolic delegate, Monsignor Palmas, reportedly has urged a gathering of about 250 Vietnamese Catholic priests not to be worried by Ambassador Lodge's appointment, which has aroused some concern over US intentions with regard to a political settlement of the war and over policy toward Catholics in general. Palmas was supported in his remarks by the moderate archbishop of Saigon. [redacted]

[redacted] Palmas' remarks caused some initial resentment, but that the priests accepted his comments and agreed to reassure their people.

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6. [redacted] three representatives of the tribal autonomy movement FULRO, formed after the September 1964 revolt in five tribal CIDG camps, met on 20 and 21 July with representatives of the government and armed forces in Darlac Province. The FULRO group, now reported to be headquartered across the border in Cambodia, offered to cooperate with the government against the Viet Cong if they were permitted to fly their own flag along with that of South Vietnam and were given supplies and support for a

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50,000-man force plus advisers. The FULRO representatives claimed to have four battalions already on Vietnamese soil. There have been signs that FULRO has suffered a reduction in the support it was receiving from Cambodia, and this new approach may indicate that it is having difficulty maintaining itself. South Vietnamese officials are inclined to doubt any extensive Viet Cong influence on FULRO, and the Montagnard director reportedly is recommending some government consideration of the approach lest FULRO be forced to look to the Communists for help.

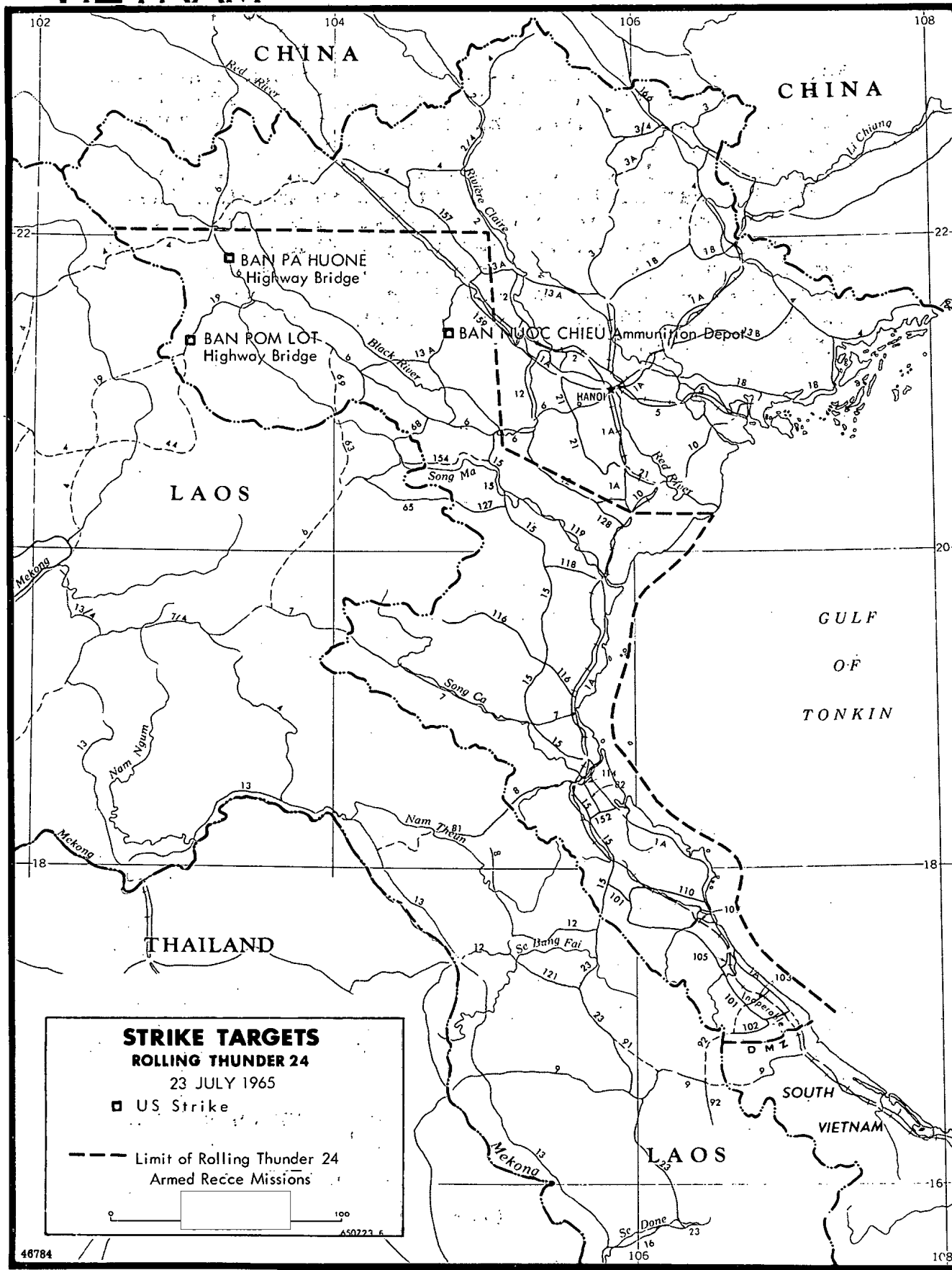
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NORTH VIETNAM

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6. A total of 48 USN and 16 USAF planes conducted armed reconnaissance missions over main lines of communications and military targets of opportunity on 23 July. USN carrier-based aircraft report a total of 28 buildings damaged, four bridges moderately damaged, two trucks destroyed, a rail line cut, five barges sunk, and two radar sites damaged. Two USN A4s were hit by 37-mm. ground fire but returned safely to the carrier.

7. USAF F-105s struck two bridges in the northwestern DRV. No damage to the Ban Pa Huone bridge was reported, but the north and south approaches to the Ban Pom Lot highway bridge were cratered and one span is possibly down. USAF F-105s report three buildings damaged on their strike against the Ban Nuoc Chieu ammo depot.

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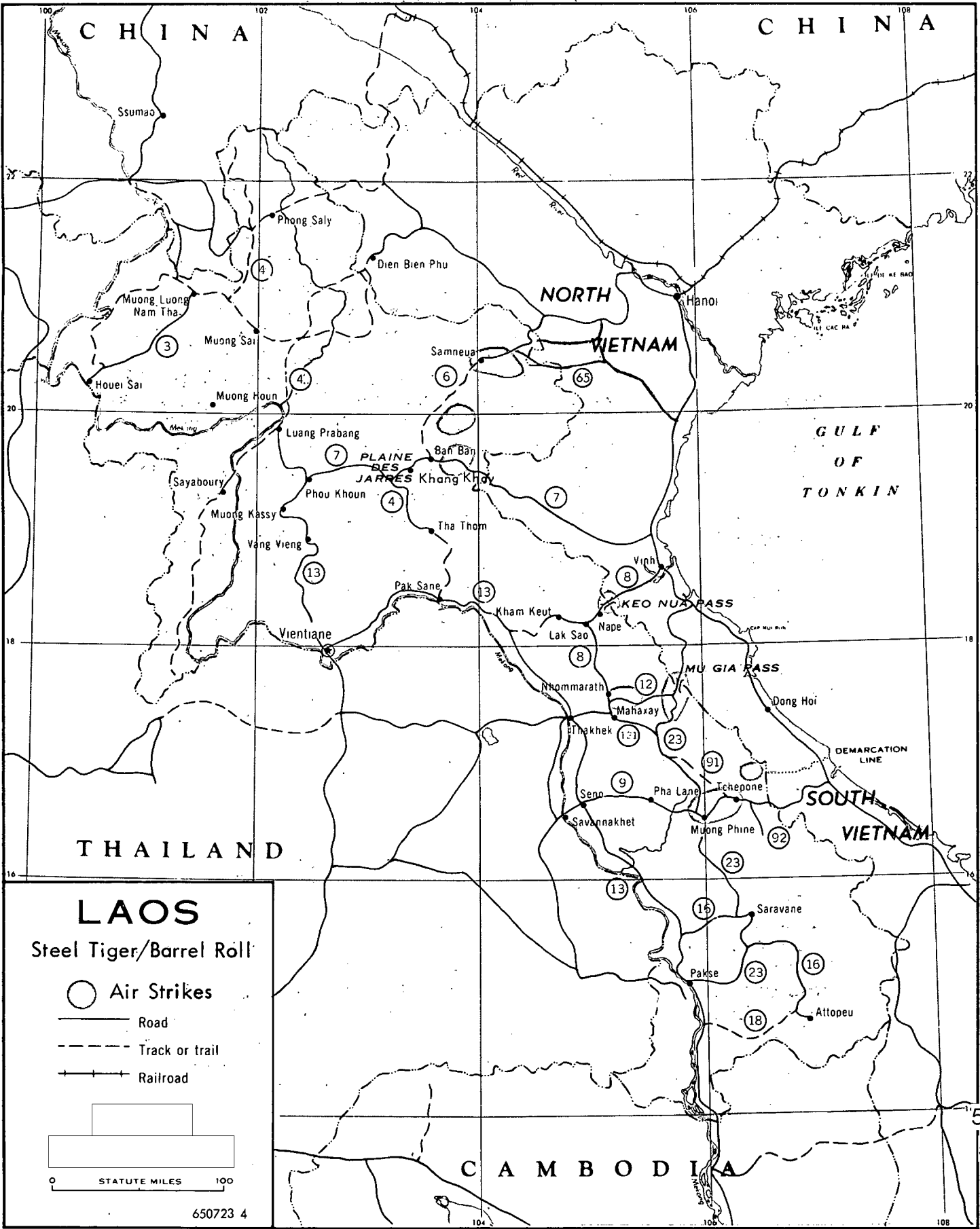
V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Liberation Front propaganda on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva agreements has been characterized by a series of pep talks for the insurgent forces in South Vietnam. The propaganda puts considerable emphasis on the hardships and difficulties that lie ahead for the Viet Cong in view of the increasing US role in the war. At the same time, however, it expresses in stronger terms than at any time in the recent past the insurgent belief in eventual victory, regardless of the extent of US involvement. The propaganda gives the impression that the Communist leaders, while generally satisfied with the extent of their military successes in recent weeks, are concerned with keeping up the morale of the insurgent forces as the US involvement grows. Similar pep talks have been frequent during the past weeks in Hanoi's Vietnamese broadcasts to South Vietnam.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

1. US Air Force and Navy aircraft flew more than 300 armed reconnaissance and strike missions against Communist positions in Laos during the past week.

2. In northern Laos, BARREL ROLL strikes were directed against installations in the Samneua and Ban Ban areas and along Routes 6, 65, and 7--the key arteries connecting these areas with North Vietnam. In addition, several missions were launched in support of Laotian ground operations in the mountain region between Ban Ban and Samneua.

3. Farther south, STEEL TIGER strikes were mounted against key roads and military installations, including bridges, passes, storage depots, regroupment areas, and truck parks.

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